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ABSTRACT

This report presents a review of the literature concerning traditionally black colleges. Emphasis is placed on governance and administration, teaching and the educational programs, financial problems and support, faculties, students, the black university and the future of black colleges. A bibliography is included. (MJM)

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Research Currents

TRADITIONALLY BLACK COLLEGES: A BRIEF REVIEW

by Stephen J. Wright

For many years the traditionally black colleges and universities have been the subject of special investigative and scholarly concern. This concern has stemmed from their uniqueness, in that, for the major part of their history, they constituted a separate "system" and, as such, have frequently been both objects of attacks and the objects of special support.

Of the 107 institutions at the present time, 76 are accredited regionally or by the appropriate professional agency; 21 offer the master's degree; and two, Atlanta and Howard Universities, offer the Ph.D. degree. In addition, six offer accredited programs in engineering, three offer degrees in law, and two offer degrees in medicine and dentistry.

GENERAL

The category of general writings on the traditionally black colleges includes a wide range of subjects, very few of which are investigative in nature. In other words, they tend to be articles of opinion and speculation.

Those writings of an investigative nature include the Southern Regional Education Board's study (Commission on Higher Education in the South 1967) *The Negro and Higher Education in the South;* Jaffe et al. (1968) *Negro Higher Education in the 1960's;* and Wright's (1971) unpublished "Study of the Five Black Colleges Related to the Presbyterian Church."

The Southern Regional Education Board's study was a brief survey of the predominantly black colleges of the region and included valuable factual data about curricula, instruction, organization and operation, and recommendations for improvements in each area.

Negro Higher Education in the 1960's, by Jaffe et al., is the most important study in the category of general writings. It includes a section on historical trends, one on recruitment practices, considerable socioeconomic data on black students, enrollment projections, and a section on major findings and their policy recommendations.

GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

In the area of governance and administration, perhaps the most important of the publications is the Nabrit and Scott study (1969) of the trustees of 50 traditionally black institutions. They found the charters and by-laws that stipulate qualifications, methods of election, and the responsibilities of board members are often out of touch with the demands of the present; most boards do not take seriously their responsibility for developing positive and creative relationships with local power structures so that their institutions can become more integral parts of their communities; trustees in the institutions investigated have conservative attitudes about education and strong tendencies to maintain the status quo; the ages of many trustees put them out of touch with the current student ideas and mood. At present there are no trustees under thirty and few between thirty and forty; only a negligible number of board members read educational publications and keep abreast of the problems and opportunities facing black colleges specifically and American higher education in general.

The most comprehensive work in the area of admissions is the monograph published by the College Entrance Examination Board, "The Administration of Admissions and Financial Aid in the United Negro College Fund Colleges" (1969). The study involved the sending of a questionnaire to 33 colleges of which 29 responded. On the basis of the survey findings, detailed recommendations were made concerning recruitment, coordination between admissions and financial aid, cooperation with other colleges, and others.

TEACHING AND THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Black Studies—Several articles concerned with Black Studies described programs in individual institutions or consortiums. Darwin Turner (1970), for example, described the Center for African-American Studies at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, as did Fisher (1971) for the program at Morgan State College; Eko (1970) edited a monograph describing the approaches employed by the Six Institutions Consortium in North Carolina; and George U. Rigsby (1970) reviewed the program at Howard University "one year later."

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There were comparatively few writings that sought to deal with the philosophical basis of Black Studies programs. Preston Wilcox (1970), in an article entitled "Black Studies As Academic Discipline," made an attempt and concluded that "to apply the same criteria to Black Studies as has been applied to White Studies is to ensure that Black Studies will become White Studies." Wright (1970) also made an attempt but arrived at a very different conclusion:

> It is my position and conviction that the viability of Black Studies will be contingent upon the extent to which they are handled as other disciplines. Otherwise, they are unlikely to receive the sustained financial support that is necessary to attract outstanding scholars who are absolutely essential to their development; or to attract, on a continuing basis, the able young men and women without whom there will be no programs.

There have been surprisingly little evaluation or guidelines in the literature on Black Studies. Henschel and Henschel (1969) did a short article, "Black Studies Programs: Promise and Pitfalls." The best piece, in the opinion of this writer, is "Black Studies: Myths and Realities" (1969) with separate articles done by scholars such as Martin Kilson, C. Vann Woodward, Kenneth B. Clark, Andrew Brimmer and others.

Curriculum—The curriculums in the traditionally black colleges were the subject of serious concern. The most ambitious undertaking was the program developed under the leadership of the Institute for Services to Education.

New and more relevant materials for the freshman and sophomore years have been developed for a large consortium of institutions. "Journey Into Discovery: The Thirteen College Curriculum Program" (1969) describes this effort.

"New Careers and Curriculum Change" (1968) reported on the Southern Regional Education Board's Conference whose purpose it was to assist the traditionally black institutions in making those changes in the curriculums that prepared their students for the new and emerging opportunities. O'Connell (1969) reported on the follow-up conference held one year later to foster improvement of curricula and instruction in developing colleges. Reid (1967), through use of a questionnaire, surveyed recent changes in the curricula in the traditionally black colleges.

Several studies were also done on specific disciplines in the institutions: Woolfolk and Smith (1967) on chemical education in Negro colleges; Hamlett (1967) on biological sciences for general education in selected predominantly Negro colleges; and Deskins and others (1971) on geography and Afro-America.

The only structural experimental study was done by Groomes (1971) as a doctoral dissertation at Florida State University. The academic performance of freshman and sophomore students in an experimental curriculum was compared to the performance of similar students in the regular curriculum.

In the compensatory and special programs designed to deal with the disadvantage many black students bring to the educative process, several relatively important programs were described: Born (1968) described the tutoring program conducted by white students at Rust College; Cooper (1966) the "ungraded" approach of the freshman program at Shaw University; Froe (1966) the program at Morgan State College; and Friedman (1969) the revised social science program at Miles College that substituted relevant problems in the local community for usual freshman social science materials.

FINANCIAL PROBLEMS AND SUPPORT

Three publications came to grips with the financial needs of black institutions. The Southern Regional Education Board (1969) issued a Task Force Report on the "Special Financial Needs of Traditionally Negro Colleges"; *Federal Agencies and Black Colleges* (1971) indicated how poorly the traditionally black colleges fared at the hands of the agencies of the Federal Government; the Southern Education Foundation's *Small Change: A Report on Federal Support for Black Colleges* (1972) makes what is, doubtless, the best case to date for a more adequate and equitable share of federal funds.

Because they serve one of the poorest of the constituencies in higher education, because the students bring to the institutions of higher education severe educational disadvantage, and because they have a long-accumulated deficit in support, the traditionally black colleges and universities have special financial needs for which the literature can make a still better case.

FACULTIES

Attracting and holding able faculties has been a critical problem for traditionally black colleges and universities for most of their history. Well-trained black faculty members have always been in short supply and those colleges with racially integrated faculties, with few exceptions, never had the means to be competitive with their white counterparts.

Huyck (1966) compared faculties in predominantly white and predominantly Negro institutions; Kirk (1969) studied the health and physical education faculties; and Scales (1969) examined the professional preparation of faculty in the South. By 1970, the employment of black faculty by the predominantly white colleges had become a visible problem. Thus two articles on the "brain drain" appeared (Poinsett 1970; and Wright 1970), while Totten (1971) did a comparative study of the academic status of black and white college and university librarians.

STUDENTS

Student unrest and participation in protests were the subjects that drew most attention. Of these, three concerned Howard University: Hare (1968) wrote of paternalism; McDowell, Lowe, and Dockett (1970) studied student participation; and *U.S. News and World Report* (1967) did a short article on what it interpreted as "Black Power" threatening the university. Other writers concerned themselves with a broader look at the mood of black students: Bass and Clancy (1968) writing in the *Reporter* described what they referred to as a militant mood; Hunter (1969) described what she calls the "black mood"; Harrison (1971) attempted to analyze reasons for the campus unrest; and Terrell described the destructive demonstrations at Lane College (1969).

Several major research pieces appeared during the period, including: Fichter's study (1967) of the graduates of the predominantly black college; Froe's study (1968) of the disadvantaged population; and Durin's study (1970) of the aspirations and motivations of Southern college youth.

Bayer and Borouch (1969) wrote an *American Council on Education Research Report* on the black student in American colleges. The volume includes an overview of studies on black higher education and an overview of programs in higher education for the disadvantaged. In addition, it includes comparative norms and characteristics for white

and black students. The sample of black students was drawn from 19 predominantly black colleges. The comprehensiveness of the data included in this document will make it useful as a bench mark study for a considerable length of time.

THE BLACK UNIVERSITY

The notion of the Black University appeared in the literature in organized form about 1968. In March of that year *The Negro Digest* presented articles on the subject, and for the next two succeeding years it devoted special articles to the subject. In addition, other articles appeared in magazines such as *Ebony*. Moreover, students at several black institutions, including Fisk and Howard Universities, sought to turn their institutions into Black Universities.

Like other revolutionary concepts, the Black University has its moderates and radicals. Darwin Turner (1968) would, in effect, make the traditionally black institutions stronger and more responsive to the needs of black students defined in more traditional ways. Perhaps the clearest presentations of the more radical concepts of the Black University are set forth in an article by McWhorter, "The Nature and Needs of the Black University" (1968), and in a later article (1969), "Struggle, Ideology and the Black University," and by Harding (1968) in "Some International Implications of the Black University."

LeMelle and LeMelle (1969) present what appears to be the most viable approach:

> Black educators must fully understand the essential tooling and socializing functions of higher education before a basic transformation of the traditional Negro college can be achieved. In short, they must be persuaded that their institutions have a special obligation to analyze, interpret and legitimize the values and interests of black America and prepare black students to maximize these values in terms of their own black interests and those of American society generally. *To be meaningful, the task of analyzing, interpreting and legitimizing must be pursued in the context of the objective realities of American Society and not in the contrived American myth.* (Italics added.)

THE FUTURE AND RAISON D'ETRE

As suggested earlier, a number of factors revived the question of the future and the *raison d'etre* of the predominantly black colleges and universities: the desegregation of predominantly white colleges; the shift in the balance of enrollment of black students to the predominantly white institutions of higher learning; the opening of new employment opportunities with educational requirements that many of the black institutions could not provide; the growing awareness of the costly duplicating of programs in neighboring black and white publicly-supported institutions; and the rising cost of higher education in general, among others.

The questioning of the future and *raison d'etre* of the black colleges and universities gave rise to a number of speeches and articles. By far, the most comprehensive and organized response to the questioning was the Summer 1971 issue of *Daedalus:* "The Future of the Black Colleges." The several extended articles touched most of the critical issues that will confront the traditionally black institutions in the future: the economic outlook, responsibility to the black community, future leadership roles, legal status, role in the social order, the role of the Southern states, and reflections on the future of black colleges by S.M. Nabrit.

Other shorter articles treat various aspects of the future of and rationale for black colleges. These include Mayhew's article, "Neighboring Black and White Colleges: A Study in Waste" (1971), which details the several pairs of institutions in the same general community that duplicate educational programs; Cheek's "The Black College in a Multiracial Society" (1972) which offers a rationale, as does Johnson's "The Importance of the Black Colleges" (1971).

Chapter 13 in Bowles and DeCosta's *Between Two Worlds* ("Prospects of the Historically Negro Colleges") is devoted to various aspects of the future of the traditionally black colleges. Moreover, the very title of the Carnegie Commission report, *From Isolation to Mainstream* (1971), suggests optimism about the future and includes such topics as "Emergence from Isolation," "A Record of Achievement," and "Competition and Cooperation." It concludes with a section that includes goals for 1980 and recommendations for the role that the federal government, state governments, foundations, and other colleges as well as black colleges should play to achieve these goals.

CONCLUSION

It is readily evident that the traditionally black colleges and universities have been the object of a considerable body of writings in the recent past. Much of it has been critical, and because this has been the case, many of the articles were devoted to rebuttals, justifications, etc. As the publicly-supported institutions become more integrated, the writings are likely to decrease. What is likely to produce new writings will be the states' efforts to deal with the wasteful duplication of curriculums and programs in neighboring black and white publicly-supported institutions. Moreover, as an increasingly larger percentage of black students enroll in the predominantly white institutions, the likelihood is that the major writings concerning black students will shift to the predominantly white institutions.

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